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Front matter, vol. 4, issue 1

Abstract

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When Sports Conquered the Republic: A Forgotten Chapter From the «Roaring Twenties.» Wolfgang Rothe5

Abstract: After the First World War, sport experienced an astonishing growth in the successor states to the two empires of central Europe, a growth which can only be explained sociologically in terms of the general character of the twentieth century as a «physical century.» Furthermore, the intellectual climate of the times as well as the psychic state of the freshly-hatched Republicans plays a special role. That is, the enormous fascination with the «Moloch of sport» can be explained on the one hand by a non-intellectual worshipping of purely physical, measurable maximum achievements (record-mania), on the other by the America-cult that arose during this period (identical with the *positive* myth of technology, the cult of machines that replaced the pre-war view). A third factor was the cult of heroes, the need to worship «great men» that was not extinguished in 1918 and which had only sought new objects. The top sportsman was one of these new objects of identification. In astonishing (and hard to explain) contradiction to the exorbitant value placed on sport in the life of the twenties, the number of distinctive literary works on sport is relatively small—much smaller than in the post-1945 period. These reflect the prevailing enthusiasm for sport, sometimes naively and positively, sometimes negatively and ironically. An expansion of the sport theme into a true philosophy of life occurs in the only sport-novel of the twenties, Kasimir Edschmid's *Sport um Gagaly*, which to some degree continues the traditional German *Bildungsroman*, but does so in a hopelessly elitist and snobbish way. (WR)

The Changing View of Abortion: A Study of Friedrich Wolf's *Cyankali* and Arnold Zweig's *Junge Frau von 1914*. Sabine Schroeder-Krassnow33

Abstract: With the end of the nineteenth century, women start becoming

more independent, demanding more rights, making a place for themselves in society. The docile woman who is seduced by the socially higher male and in desperation commits infanticide begins to fade from literature. At the same time a new woman with a fresh vitality emerges and deals with the old problem of pregnancy and abortion. Two works which treat this type of woman are examined and the parallels as well as the differences between the portrayal are established. Although the heroines in Wolf's play and Zweig's novel come from different social backgrounds, they encounter almost identical problems in trying to have an abortion. Zweig's novel is more detailed in its account of the abortion than the play, and although it was written only two years after Wolf's play, Zweig takes the problem of the modern woman a big step further by not letting his heroine die as a result of the abortion. (SCK)

Nontraditional Features of Heinrich Böll's War Books: Innovations of a Pacifist. W. Lee Nahrgang 49

Abstract: Heinrich Böll, recipient of the Nobel Prize for literature in 1972, has treated the theme of war throughout his literary career; and in some ways his war books and stories differ considerably from those of other contemporary German writers. In fact, some authorities argue that none of his works are true war books in the traditional sense. Perhaps the most significant difference between Böll's works and the war books of most other authors is that he equates World War II with previous military conflicts, whereas they consider it uniquely evil because of the various crimes of the National Socialists. This nontraditional feature of Böll's works, like all others, emphasizes the negative nature of war in general. In Böll's view, all wars are essentially alike. Even defensive wars are totally negative at all times for all of those who become involved in them. Because they cause immense suffering for such large numbers of ordinary, innocent citizens of all participating countries, no wars can be justified. When Böll feels that it assists him in emphasizing this pacifistic message, he transcends the format of the contemporary German war book and produces works which are unique in many respects. (WLN)

Handke's «Kafkaesque» Novel: Semiotic Processes in *Die Angst des Tormanns beim Elfmeter*. June Schlueter 63

Abstract: *Die Angst des Tormanns beim Elfmeter* is characterized by qualities which have come to be known as «Kafkaesque.» The behavior of the protagonist is unexplained, the prevailing atmosphere is one of anxiety,

and a fuzzy suggestiveness informs the novel's fictive world. Yet, as with Kafka's work, mimetic or allegorical interpretations seem to impoverish rather than to enrich the text. It may well be that the primary concern of both authors is to illumine not the character of the world, but the character of meaning itself. In Handke's novel, Josef Bloch, eluding capture by the Austrian police following his murder of a movie clerk, engages in a search for «semiotic sanity». Bloch's exceptionally aware rethinking of relationship among the phenomenal world, self, and language yields considerable insight into the ontology of meaning, revealing the Kafkaesque qualities of the novel to be the product of normal semiotic processes of life. (JS)

An Interview with Peter Handke. June Schlueter 75

Abstract: Handke comments on the relationship of his early essays to his fiction, maintaining that there is no theory of literature but only practice. For him, fiction brings daily occurrences into a new order, with the point of intersection of these occurrences suggesting a story. Handke believes there will always be a need for narrative prose which goes beyond mere reportage, and, with respect to his journal, *Das Gewicht der Welt*, he sees no contradiction between «journal» and «fiction.» His distinction between everyday and poetic language is central to Handke's approach to fiction. Explaining that there is no language for nature, he speaks at length of his latest novel, *Langsame Heimkehr*, which he calls an epic poem. Handke also comments on writers who have influenced his thinking and work, including Barthes and Hölderlin; considers the relationship of the creative impulse to film-making, drama, and fiction; and speculates as to why college students in America are attracted to his work. (JS)

An Interview with Hermann Kant. Joan E. Holmes 89

Abstract: In an interview with Joan E. Holmes (University of Kansas), Hermann Kant, novelist and current president of the Writers Union of the German Democratic Republic (GDR or East Germany), discusses his own work, literary developments since 1949 in the GDR, and the changing concept of socialist realism. Central to all of these topics is the role of the writer and the function of literature in a socialist system, a question which resulted in a heated controversy during the summer and fall of 1979 in the GDR. The crux of the matter lies in the nature of Marxist theory and is at least as old as the Sickingen debate of 1859, when Marx, Engels and Lassalle discussed the kind of literature that the fledgling socialist movement should encourage in order to promote the building of a future communist society. The question of

the role of the author and the function of literature has reappeared since that time in various forms—in the formulation of the concept of socialist realism in the 1930's by Gorki and Soviet Party Secretary Zhdanov, in the formalism debates of the 1950's, in the dictates of the Bitterfelder Way (1960's), and in the liberalizing influence of the proclamations of the Eighth Party Congress in 1971. Since the Ninth Party Congress (May 1976), the controversy has become a critical matter in the cultural policies of the GDR, a country where literature is considered an important political tool.

Hermann Kant, in the tradition of the Eighth and Ninth Party Congresses, presents in this interview a broad interpretation of the concept of socialist realism, while at the same time strongly emphasizing the responsibility of the author vis à vis the socialist society. He questions whether too much rapid change can be beneficial for East Germany, and suggests that both tolerance and caution are required. (JH)